

# Payne Stewart was an accomplished golfer and model Christian



**Ralph Gaillard**  
Golf-N-Around

The world of golf was stuck with a great loss last week. Payne Stewart's untimely death in an airplane crash has had a devastating impact on golfers and nongolfers worldwide.

Even if you did not know who Payne Stewart was, you perhaps did know him by the colorful golf

outfits he wore while playing on the PGA Tour. The knickers and Hogan-style cap he wore certainly broke with current golf attire etiquette and set him apart from his fellow professional golfers. He made the change in attire several years ago while practicing on the range before a tournament. He stated that he noticed that the golfers practicing on either side of him had on the same cap, shirt and pants to include colors that he was wearing.

Being his own person and an individual, Stewart began wearing the knickers and the Hogan cap while playing on tour. He always

got a lot of "razzing" from his fellow pros but stuck it out and the knickers and the cap became his trademark.

Stewart, who recently won the U.S. Open at Pinehurst, was a model Christian, husband and father, and will be missed.

That golf "Tiger" was on the prowl again last weekend in Texas. Tiger Woods won the Tour Championship and his seventh title in 1999. It was his third win in his last three starts and is the most wins on the PGA Tour since Johnny Miller won eight titles in 1974. Tiger has actually won eight tournaments this year but his win at the

Deutsche Bank-SAP Open TPC of Europe is not a PGA-sanctioned event.

Woods has won \$5.6 million in competition this year, which is only \$80,000 less than Jack Nicklaus won in his entire career. Woods has an opportunity to match Miller's PGA record, as he will be playing in this week's PGA-sanctioned tournament in Europe. With the Tour Championship win Tiger breaks the \$10 million mark in career earnings. There can now be no doubt that Tiger Woods is "The Man" on the PGA Tour. Tune in this weekend for more greatness and golf history.

Local happenings: There is some talk going around that this writer reports only on others' matches and not his own. Well, here they are: Walter Foster and Lonnie Wellman beat this writer in a recent match at "The Lakes." The rematch with Foster saw this writer avenging the previous loss. Wellman and this writer have not played their rematch. Rest assured Wellman would demand that the results be reported, that is, if he wins. Sam Puryear also won a recent match with this writer. With these results, I might need

a lesson or two. Anyway, I do have a good time out there with these guys.

James Dixon and Joe Thompson also beat Walt Foster in recent matches. Bobby "Li'l Pro" Wofford avenged his putting contest loss to David "The Good Doctor" Peay in the rematch.

Until next time - keep it in the fairway.

If you have ideas for Golf-N-Around, call The Chronicle at (336) 723-8428 or e-mail Ralph Gaillard at ralphg@bellsouth.net.

## Blackburn

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And again Blackburn was not far away. He was among the 13,000 fans in attendance at the competition.

"It was a great experience," Blackburn said during a recent interview with The Chronicle. "I think Chris benefited from me being there and for me it was an awesome opportunity."

The trip, paid for by John Hancock Insurance, principal sponsor of the U.S. Gymnastics team, allowed Blackburn and Young's mother - Lillie Young - to experience the international flavor of competition.

"I enjoyed it and I think his mom enjoyed it," Blackburn said. "Both of us have gotten a chance to see places we never would have gotten a chance to see if it had not been for Chris competing."

What made going to the competition even more gratifying was the fact that Young had reached a low point in his career a little over three years ago when he left the University of Minnesota.

"He was really discouraged and down on himself," Blackburn said. "He had to make some decisions on his own and I tried to give him some advice on not giving up on his dream of making it to the Olympics."

Young, who had first burst onto the national scene during junior national competition as a 9-year-old, decided to make one more try. With the backing of Ron Gallimore, senior director of men's programs with USA Gymnastics, Young was invited to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. He slowly regained his confidence and form, rising slowly to the top of the ranks in the United States.

By the time the Goodwill Games rolled around last summer, Young had earned himself a place among the top six U.S. male gymnasts.

Young, in his first international competition on the senior level, made a big splash at the Goodwill Games and drew praise from some of the top gymnastic commentators in the country. They included former Olympic champion Bart Connor, who termed Young's high-bar routine "the best in the world."

That performance helped Young solidify a position on the World Cup team and catapulted him to the top of the gymnastic world.

After a top finish in the Goodwill Games, Blackburn found out that he and Young's mother would

be joining their son for the competition in China.

Although Blackburn had been by his son's side in most of his competitions through the years, he still wasn't prepared for the international experience that began with a 12-hour flight to Beijing and then a two-hour ride to Teinjing.

After taking in much sight-seeing in China, including the Great Wall of China, Blackburn said he received a unique experience at the gymnastics competition. Young started slowly the first day, but then scored a 9.3 on the pommel horse and a 9.325 on the parallel bars.

With an Olympic berth on the line, the team needed Young to step up his scores on his final two exercises and he did that, notching a 9.5 on high bars and a 9.4 on the

vault. According to judges and commentators Young probably would have scored a 10.0 if he had stuck his dismount on the high bars. But nevertheless, both routines wowed the crowd and fans sought Young and his father out for autographs.

"That's the first time in my life that fans had come up to me and wanted to get my autograph or wanted me to take a picture with them," Blackburn said. "It was totally unbelievable."

Young's performance wasn't, according to Blackburn.

"He's my son, but I have to give him a lot of credit for the way he's stayed with it even when it looked like his career was over."

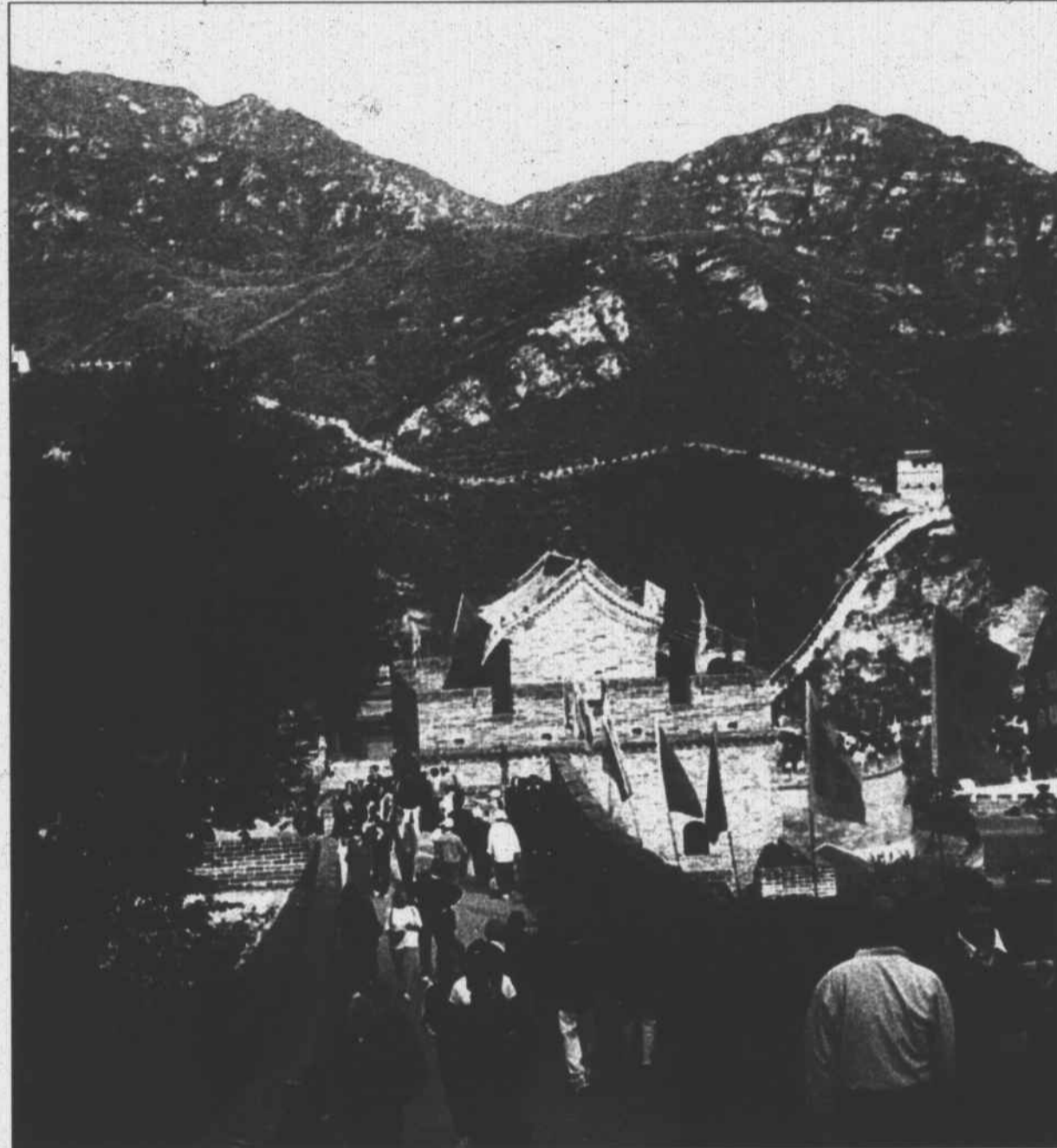
The first time came during Young's senior year in high school when he tore his anterior cruciate

ligament playing football for West Forsyth. The doctors told him his chances of regaining his championship form were slim. However, he rehabilitated the injury and earned a scholarship to Minnesota. After things didn't work out there, it looked like Young's career was again over. But he fought his way back and landed a spot at the Olympic Training Center.

Now, he's facing another challenge. Young is scheduled to have arthroscopic surgery on his shoulder in the upcoming weeks.

"Chris is ready to go ahead and get it out of the way," Blackburn said. "He's going to have the surgery and try to get ready for the Winter Cup in Las Vegas in February."

Blackburn plans on being right there to help him through it - just like he's always been.



Blackburn visited several tourist sites, including China's Great Wall.



Blackburn signs autographs.

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